

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT: A National Survey Exploring School Nurses Knowledge and Experience When Working with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

STUDENT: Constance E. McIntosh

DEGREE: Doctorate of Education in Special Education

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: July 2013

PAGES: 114

This study explored school nurses knowledge of the diagnostic criteria and secondary conditions related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), their involvement in the identification and treatment of ASD, their knowledge of medication used to treat ASD, and their overall medication management of children with ASD. Participants included 100 school nurses, representing 18 states, who completed a survey on ASD. The response rate was 16.45%. The majority of school nurses were aware Autism and Asperger's Disorder should fall under the classification of ASD within the school setting. They were less sure on whether PDD-NOS should be included as an ASD. A high percentage indicated they received training in the area of ASD from self-study rather than from formal coursework or supervised clinical experiences. Results found limited involvement of school nurses during the assessment and evaluation process. However, there was more involvement after children had been classified with an ASD, which was primarily limited to the administration of medication and medical treatments. School nurses reported being qualified to administer medication to children with ASD. They also reported being knowledgeable regarding the potential side effects of the medication they administered. The most common medication administered to children with ASD was stimulants. One anti-

psychotic medication, Risperdal, appears to be administered fairly frequently by school nurses to children with ASD. Eighty percent surveyed did not report making any medication errors. The majority of school nurses were responsible for supervision of un-licensed personnel in the administration of medication. Besides nurses, secretaries/administrative assistants were the most common school employees administering medication within schools.